



Anne Severn and the Fieldings

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May Sinclair (1863 - 1946)

Written in an era of cheap, formulaic romantic fiction, the nuanced, seditious, quietly erotic novels of May Sinclair stand out like literature from another era entirely. There is romance in *Anne Severn and the Fieldings*, but it's romance of the best and profoundest kind, set in the context of authentic human personalities and tragic historical events. The motherless Anne Severn is adopted into the Fielding family and grows up in intimate friendship with the three Fielding sons, all of whom love her. World War I explodes into their lives with hideous effect, sending all three sons back damaged in one way or another. Anne herself sees the horrors of war as an ambulance driver, meeting along the way (in a whimsical little self-referential sentence) a "queer little middle-aged lady out for a job at the front" whom we recognize as May Sinclair herself, who volunteered for just such an adventure in 1914. Sinclair always was half-Victorian, half-modern, so it is no surprise to find her using subtle, lovely, dreamlike, decorous prose to undermine social conventions on all sides. Most startling, perhaps, is the unambiguous sexuality that complicates the lives of her characters, troubling marriages and consummating true love. She creates personalities about whom we care much more than we care about proprieties and social boundaries, and Anne Severn stands as one of Sinclair's most courageous and compelling heroines.

May Sinclair

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